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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to fill a void in literary criticism on Lewis's conception of satire by providing a systematic account of his satiric theory and practice, because his discursive and creative satirical writings are as miscellaneous as the nature of the satirical mode. Here I apply Griffin's (1994) conception of satiric discourse (1994) based on a rhetoric of inquiry, a rhetoric of provocation, a rhetoric of display and a rhetoric of play. In this regard, the study attempts to illuminate the broad semantic nature of Lewis's lampoon.

**Keywords:** Wyndham Lewis, satire theory and practice, Menippean satire, rhetoric, politics and history.

**Título en español:** “¡Marionetas, no os paréis!” Una nueva lectura del discurso satírico de Wyndham Lewis

**Resumen:** Este artículo pretende cubrir una laguna en la investigación sobre la concepción de la sátira de Lewis, proporcionando una explicación sistemática de su teoría y práctica, ya que sus obras discursivas y creativas son de carácter tan misceláneo como la propia naturaleza del modo satírico. Para ello se aplica la concepción del discurso satírico de Griffin (1994) que se basa en la interrogación retórica, la retórica de la provocación, la retórica de la exposición y la retórica de la representación. De este modo, el trabajo trata de arrojar luz nueva sobre la naturaleza tan diversa de la sátira Lewisiana.

**Palabras clave:** Wyndham Lewis, teoría y práctica sobre la sátira, sátira Menipea, retórica, política e historia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Is Lewis's satiric theory a highly rhetorical and moral art? Are his books of fiction exclusively aimed at derisive reduction and rejection? Is his satiric method a mere excuse for destructive analysis, personal invective and worthless criticism? Novel readers of Lewis's creations and discursive writings are so often astonished by reading them for the first time that they may answer 'yes'; learned specialists probably admit that providing a satisfactory response to these questions would require an entire book.

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In *Men Without Art*, the artist identifies satire with art (13).<sup>3</sup> The large sample of comments for and against his main satiric piece *AG* collected by Roy Campbell in *The History of a Rejected Review* also gives us an idea of the miscellaneous nature of Lewis's satire.<sup>4</sup> Here *AG* is described as a dramatic ‘farce,’ a massive piece of gargantuan irony and a brilliant example of wit, a huge burlesque, a caricature and an example of tragic laughter, among other things. The review also includes comments on Lewis's use of highly improbable plot situations, exaggerated characters and slapstick elements for humorous effect in this work. Finally, *AG* is described as a ludicrous and empty show, and a mockery of London bourgeoisie marked by chases, collisions, and crude practical jokes. My point is that such a varied list of qualifying adjectives to the book, let alone, the large number of rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus that Lewis is said to exploit in it, imply that systematising Lewis's satiric discourse is as difficult a task for his critics as it is for theorists of satire to define its nature.<sup>5</sup> Further, the fact that Lewis is not only a practitioner of satire, but also a theorist who uses some of his discursive books to propagandize for his own particular way of writing satire even turn this mode to be more miscellaneous.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, Lewis's satiric theory and practice can be said to be as complex as satire's own nature and to have had a very strong weight in his life.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, it strikes one as bizarre that “his relationship with satire has received general or little attention in recent years” (Somigli, 1993: 126).<sup>8</sup>

Inspiration for this paper comes from the fact that, to date, there are no studies that I know of that provide a critical conspectus of Lewis's conception of satire as manifest in his discursive and creative writings. This fact whet my appetite for renewed reading and renewed speculation of Lewis's satiric work, and even more so especially after reading some of the comments made by outstanding critics of satiric theory. Thus, Clark (1991: 151) emphasizes Lewis's early vision of a “world-devouring running-down” in ludicrous

<sup>3</sup> From now on, Lewis's books will be referred to by using these abbreviations: *AG*, for *The Apes of God*; *SF*, for *Satire and Fiction*; *MWA*, for *Men Without Art*; *TWA*, for *The Writer and The Absolute*; *RA*, for *Rude Assignment*; *T*, for *Tarr*; *RQ*, for *The Roaring Queen*; *SB*, for *Snooty Baronet*; *RL*, for *Revenge for Love*; *OGNG*, for *The Old Gang and the New Gang*; *VS*, for *The Vulgar Streak*; *ABR*, for *The Art of Being Ruled*; *DOY*, for *The Doom of Youth*; *LF*, for *The Lion and the Fox*; *THA*, for *The Human Age*; *SC*, for *Self-Condemed*; *THC*, for *The Childermass*; *ES*, for “Enemy of the Stars”; *WB*, for *The Wild Body*; *BB*, for *Blasting and Bombardiering* and *TWM*, for *Time and Western Man*.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘satire’ is rather difficult to define. According to theorists, ‘satire’ arouses from the Roman noun *satura* meaning ‘miscellany’. Satire is best thought of as a ‘procedure’ or as a ‘mode’, rather than as a literary kind, because it can appear anywhere and at any moment. In other words, satire is one of the most problematic modes of writing, since it belongs to no kind, it is unruly, various and open to deal with everything. Griffin (1994: 3-4) and Elices (2005: 47) corroborate this idea too.

<sup>5</sup> Elices (2005: 79-108) has made serious attempts to clarify the complexities that underlie satire from a theoretical perspective.

<sup>6</sup> See *SF*, *MWA*, *TWA* and *RA*, whose miscellaneous nature may be one of the reasons why Lewis's satiric theory sometimes fails to account for his own practice.

<sup>7</sup> This view of Lewis's conception of satire as being a key to his entire *oeuvre* is also supported by Foshay (1992: 56) and Beasley (2007: 132).

<sup>8</sup> Recent interest in Lewis's creative and visual art in Spain has been manifested by: 1) the first Major Wyndham Lewis Exhibition hosted by the Juan March foundation (Madrid) last May 2010; and 2) The joint research project between the University of La Rioja and the University of Plymouth financed by the AHRC aimed to put Lewis's Listener art criticism online (<http://www.unirioja.es/listenerartcriticism>), that is, reviews he did for the weekly cultural journal of the BBC between 1946-1951.

terms. Griffin (1994: 138) calls attention to Lewis’s relevance in recovering satire “in the London of the 1930s” (185) after two centuries of silence. Finally, Griffin highlights Lewis’s view that “good satire [...] is often “nonmoral” (185) and Knight (2004: 5) also shows admiration for the satirist’s position on satire as being a mode that is “independent of moral purpose.”

My argument here is that Lewis’s satiric theory and practice are the result of his dialogical stance, unorthodox utterances, skilful use of the technique of surprise, paradox and the absurd, and of his complex discourse. These traits of Lewis’s satirical practice arise as visible signs of his remarkably creative and violent perfectionist mind, rather than of his purely destructive intelligence, as some critics have said. Making Griffin’s words (1994: 4-5) mine, Lewis’s satiric discourse can be said to be “problematic, open-ended, essayistic, ambiguous in its relationship to history, uncertain in its political effect, resistant to formal closure, more inclined to ask questions than to provide answers, and ambivalent about the pleasures it offers.” Here I follow Griffin’s novel conception of satiric discourse—and so, that of the “Chicago” theorists of satire—in order to study Lewis’s satire, because applying a conventional theory of satire’s moral rhetoric would be inadequate. Lewis’s satire needs to be tackled from a broader critical perspective which is akin in meaning to the nature of his *oeuvre*.

This application of Griffin’s view of a rhetoric of inquiry, a rhetoric of provocation, a rhetoric of display and a rhetoric of play to the study of Lewis’s satiric theory and practice aims at, first, stimulating renewed reading and speculation of his *oeuvre* and, second, clarifying the way his satire works in the satirical tradition. To carry out this double task, I focus not on the plot or “events” within Lewis’s books, but on his satiric discourse. In other words, I not only concentrate on Lewis the satirist, his satire’s rhetorical purposes and its audience, but also reconstruct his conception of satire, something I do by taking evidence from his mouthpiece characters as well as from his books of criticism. Here I deal with traditional topics of satiric theory such as the role of Lewis as moralist, his theory of satire within context, the nature of his satiric rhetoric, the relationship of his satire to the world of history and his satire alleged impact on political order. As a corollary, I point the way towards a new theoretical exploration of Lewis’s satire.

## 2. STATE OF THE ART REVIEW

Even though Knight (2004: 10) describes Lewis as an example of “obvious canonic satirist”, his satiric pieces have gone virtually unconsidered in wide-ranging theoretical studies of satire. One must find consolation in literary criticism where the artist’s main satirical pieces and discursive writings on satire are given some consideration from diverse perspectives (Chapman 1971, 1973; Henkle 1979; Smith (in Meyers 1980); Pritchard (in Meyers 1980); Somigli 1993; Perrino 1995a, 1995b; Beasley 2007) Even though most criticism on Lewis’s satiric theory and practice offers valuable insights into the nature of his satire, none of these works provides a systematic account of his conception of satire. Perrino’s point on Lewis’s difficulty of dispensing with a moral basis in *SF*, for example, is not accurate enough. I agree with Knight (2004) to a larger extent (“satire sees morality as hypocritical, or as a presumptuous effort to assert a social control to which the moralist has

no right.”) As Lewis states ““We should after all only be laughing *at ourselves!*””? (*MWA*, 92) Furthermore, all the aforementioned essays describe some of the rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus, that is, irony, parody, wit, detachment, fantasy, utopia, dystopia or scatology, as being exploited by Lewis in his work, yet none of these articles provides a detailed analysis of such utilisation in Lewis’s work. Beasley (2007), for example, does not go into detail into Lewis’s conception of satire, as one may expect from the title of her work. This paper tries not only to open up and clear away some false or limited understanding of Lewis’s satiric theory and practice, but also to pose some further questions.

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST AS MORALIST

This is one of the traditional topics of satiric theory. After Lewis’s experiences in World War I, the Enemy makes of satire a must in his life. He is witness to a society in intellectual and moral dissolution, and despairs for living in an era whose moralities are in essence political. (“Materialist or “power” values have taken the place of the religious unmaterial values.” [...] “Every value that is not a political value [...] is taboo.” [...] “No value that is not an economic value [...] is permitted” (*MWA*, 208-209)) For Lewis, the greatest satire is non-moral, though.

But how can satire stand without the moral sanction? you may ask. For satire can only exist in contrast to something else. [...] it is my belief that “satire” for *its own sake* [...] is possible. [...] And as to *laughter*, [...] has a function [...] similar to art. It is the preserver much more than the destroyer. And, in a sense, *everyone* should be laughed at or else *no one* should be laughed at. It seems that ultimately that is the alternative. (*MWA*, 88-89)

This conception of satire explains that Lewis acknowledges: “I am such an indifferent moralist myself, and so naturalist an artist,” (*MWA*, 156). The artist does not show any concern for politics, morals or money, but for “freedom” (212); the freedom of the artist, not as moralist, but a searcher for truth. “Freedom to write what one regards as true is my subject throughout these pages. [...] FREEDOM of the writer to speculate [...] among other things, about social questions; to criticize, on occasion, the conduct of public affairs” (*WA*, 4-29)

Lewis views the moralist as the enemy of the artist. As Knight (2004: 30) states, “The idea that satire is justified in its nastiness by its moral or didactic functions has run through the history of satiric theory [...] Wyndham Lewis articulates the opposite position.” Indeed, Lewis acknowledges that “satire” is “ugly”, alike to “humour and wit” (*MWA*, 89), a special sort of laughter that “is non-personal and non-moral.” (92) Knight’s point that “some excellent satire is moral, but many of the qualities revealed by satiric representation – ugliness, clumsiness, foolishness, bad taste, or stupidity – could not reasonably be thought of as immoral” is illuminating for this paper here, because it clarifies that Lewis’s *WB*, *T* and *SB* constitute three good satirical examples of the qualities aforementioned by Knight in his work.

As Smith (1984) says, the artist cannot stand completely outside the process of history in which he is involved, and outside his own environment. (“No “detachment” is possible,

for a man – especially for a man who has taken part in these events.” (*OGNG*, 55)) In this sense, it is Spender (1935: 212-213) who leads to the heart of the matter, when he suggests that the subject of Lewis’s satire is “moral indignation, even though Lewis may have no moral axe to grind, and is no politician.” For Spender, this amorality of the artist “is in itself a moral point of view, because it is related to [...] the position of the artist in society”. Nevertheless, Swift’s tenet that “satire can be written “As with a moral View design’d” and yet not precipitate fixed moral precepts” (Griffin, 1994: 26) is very close to Lewis’s assumptions as well. Indeed, one may think of Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Modest Proposal* and Lewis’s *VS*, since all of them are moral satires, yet satires from which one can not draw clear conclusions and moral directives.<sup>9</sup>

In a nutshell, Lewis sets up, tests, examines, and discards moral and aesthetic values in his books. Following Elkin’s view on satire (1973: 84), the Enemy’s satires are “valuable for the insights” they give “into moral problems, not for providing solutions to them.” Further the different voices that enter into unresolved dialogue in Lewis’s satiric works so as to dazzle an audience with striking effects convert them into examples of the non-moral. As Lewis rightly argues,

We know that to improve our conditions as animals we must banish violence from life. [...] Where violence is concerned the aesthetic principle is evidently of more weight than the “moral”, the latter being only the machinery to regulate the former. [...] As measure is the principle of all true art, and as art is an enemy of all excess, so it is along aesthetic lines that the solution of this problem should be sought rather than along moral (or police) lines, or humanitarian ones. (*ABR*, 59-65)

Lewis does write satire about morals, although he is not a moralist. Using Elices (2005: 35) words for the purposes of this paper, just like Waugh, Orwell or Huxley, Lewis does not expect his works to “instigate a moral change in [his] readership”. [...] “As Freinberg points out” Lewis proposes “a criterion of “appropriateness” of social acceptability.” It is the readers and critics of his books who view them in a monological manner the only people responsible for Lewis having been accused of being a moralist, a violent and even a buffoon.

#### 4. LEWIS’S THEORY OF SATIRE IN A POLEMICAL CONTEXT

As explained, Lewis’s emphasis on satire is not on its moral function, as it dominated “satiric theory from the Renaissance into the mid-twentieth century” (Griffin, 1994: 10). Rather, his satiric stance relates him to a tradition of high rhetoricians.

Lewis belongs to a tradition in which satirists have tried to kill off certain types of behaviour: the tradition runs from Juvenal to Petronious through Nashe and Donne, to

<sup>9</sup> According to Elices, Swift’s intention was moralising, although he very soon realised that humankind was reluctant to change and improvement. This happened after Swift realised that his reforming intention with *Gulliver’s Travels* had been a complete failure because nothing of what he denounced really changed. (personal communication)

Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida*, Jonson, Marston and others of their contemporaries, and then from Swift and Smollet through Byron and Peacock, down to Lewis. [...] By killing off bad artists, Lewis makes simultaneous use of two traditions of satire: social satire, and the satire upon ideas. His fictions delineate the social circumstances that support the bad artist and the bad idea. (Munton, in Corbett 1998: 17)

Munton is right when he argues that Lewis's satiric discourse has clear historical footprints from the roman satirist Juvenal,<sup>10</sup> because the former writes nothing but satire, is a highly skilled declamatory rhetorician, and displays a richness of invention and a copiousness of example and wit. See this example of Juvenal's concern for flattery which I find very similar to Lewis's satiric discourse in *ABR*, *DOY* and *LF*.

What of this again, that these people are experts in *flattery*, and will commend the talk of an illiterate, or the beauty of a deformed, friend, and compare the scraggy neck of some weakling to the brawny throat of Hercules when holding up Antaeus high above the earth; (Juvenal, *Satire III*, 86; my emphasis)

Juvenal's tragic satire is as angry and austere as Lewis's. The way the former exclaims, exaggerates, lashes and stabs seems to be mirrored in Lewis's *AG*, *RQ* or *SB*. See how Juvenal's satiric invective storms just as much as Lewis's.

If you are not to love the woman betrothed and united to you in due form, what reason have you for marrying? Why waste the supper, and the wedding cakes to be given to the well-filled guests when the company is slipping away. [...] If you are honestly uxorious, and devoted to one woman, then bow your head and submit your neck ready to bear the yoke. [...] She will arrange your friendships for you; she will turn your now-aged friend from the door which saw the beginnings of his beard. (Juvenal, *Satire VI*)

All I asked him was that he should *share* with me the burden of being civil to such a painfully unattractive woman. He laughed loudly – I smiled, I had to humour him. After all, I continued, the poor girl is alone, thousands of miles from home, [...] He said he would share with me as far as he was able the duties of host and consoler of the Englishwoman in foreign parts, so long as I didn't ask him to sleep with her! [...] Eventually she [...] must learn to stop when she was told. (*SB*, 249)

Not only Juvenal's rhetoric is appealing to Lewis, the matter-of-fact satire and conversations of Menippean<sup>11</sup> writers like Petronious, and the mastery of wit of some Elizabethan theorists like Donne or Jonson are very much liked by the Enemy.<sup>12</sup> The eighteenth century

<sup>10</sup> See Lewis's *MWA* (88)

<sup>11</sup> Lewis shows fondness of Menippean writers like Aristophanes and Sophocles since their works are “organic and full of purpose” (*MWA*, 153). There are writers like Yeats who even compare Lewis to some Menippean writers like Pirandello. See *SF* (1930: 29).

<sup>12</sup> Griffin (1994) claims that Petronious, Donne and Jonson not only follow a rhetoric that is more derived from Horace than Juvenal, but they also reject the latter's angry rant. This point does not invalidate a connection that seems to prevail between the three aforementioned satirists and Lewis. For evidence of Lewis's admiration for Jonson and Donne, read pages 85, 91, 117 and 237 of *MWA*.



has relevant satirical figures also and these are attractive for Lewis's likings as well. Swift's satiric theory, which has an important footprint from earlier works by Petronius or Rabelais is worth commenting on, because Lewis not only shows admiration for him (and the aforementioned satirical writers), but also for other Augustan satirists like Dryden<sup>13</sup> and Pope.

Dryden dispensed with the protective moralistic machinery of the classical satire. [...] Returning to Hazlitt's misunderstanding, in Swift, in Dryden, in Pope, it is not the “natural,” “bubbling” laughter of Shakespearean comedy that you should expect to find. [...] *Laughter* is the medium employed, certainly, but there is laughter and laughter. That of true satire is as it were *tragic* laughter. (*MWA*, 88-92)

Indeed, it is the tradition of “learned wit” that links not only all these satirists, but also these satirists and the figure of Sterne. The next two centuries witness satire declination, though. As Griffin (1994: 137-8) rightly argues:

As the base of English culture shifted from aristocratic to bourgeois in the late eighteenth century, satire declined. Fittingly, the lordly Byron was chief satirist among the Romantics, and the last great English satirist. Although he was contemptuous of English high society, Byron's tone—his recklessness and irreverence, as Leavis called it—is that of an aristocrat. If satire staged a brief recovery in the London of the 1930s—with W.H. Auden, Wyndham Lewis, and Roy Campbell—perhaps it was because some of the old coterie conditions were temporarily reestablished.

For Lewis, the writing of satire is extremely “violently discouraged in England”, while “humour” is “far preferred”. This is due to “the growing fanaticism in political life”, which practically makes “an end of free expression in that field.” The trouble with the satirist “is that he is liable to *think*” “a highly unpopular endowment” in his time. Had Lewis applied a gentle satire to his works by turning them humorous rather than coarse, he would not only have secured a place for himself in the satirical tradition, but also more profit. (*RA*, 112) Lewis reckons the business mind having substituted the individual mind; a fact that he claims to have been violently been discussed by thinkers like Ruskin, Samuel Butler, Thomas Carlyle, Love Peacock and Matthew Arnold, that is, “all the most clear-sighted people of the nineteenth century (the century of the industrial revolution) [who promoted] the impartial truth of art and of science” (213) Lewis is determined “to repudiate the vulgarity of the bourgeois, as well as his *wickedness*.” In stating so, Lewis corroborates Griffin's (1994: 137) point that “satire thrives in a culture whose basis is aristocratic rather than bourgeois.”

Lewis's discursive writings contain principles that work as precepts for his theory of satire. Depending on how near or far from them a number of contemporary writers and intellectuals are, Lewis is also for or against them. Accordingly, he holds modern practitioners of satire like Hemingway, Faulkner and Eliot in very high esteem (*RA*, 15) and he praises the satiric work of Brunetière and his classics –Molière, Boileau, La Fontaine, Racine,

<sup>13</sup> It is in *SF* (1976: 45) where Lewis compares himself to Dryden and Juvenal, even though he claims that satire cannot be moralistic at all. Here Lewis states that he feels identified with Jonson and Pope as well.

Bossuet and La Bruyère– (*RA*, 158) as well; something that he does because they do not rebel against the contemptible bourgeois morals of the French society they illustrate, but accept them submissively and respectfully.

Further, Lewis views satire as cold, good, externalist and non-emotional. For him, satire seeks the truth of scientific intelligence because it is objective. In other words, he applies his satiric rhetoric to write about “the shell of the animal, not its intestines like D. H. Lawrence,” (*MWA*, 99) Joyce, James and Hazlitt, whose works–he claims–are subjective. Quoting a statement by Swift, Lewis states “You do not treat nature wisely by always striving to get beneath the surface” (107) This is why Lewis shows scepticism of realistic works by Flaubert, Gautier and Balzac.

Lewis’s satiric books not only recreate a selection of people that are “magnified [...] for its own philosophic purposes [...] [that is, in order to] make them look much more foolish!” (113); they also show that he is really against the works by writers like Austen and Trollope that “depict an Alice in Wonderland World.” (203) By saying that these writers are “keep-smiling moralists,” (204) Lewis justifies the violent spirit of his satiric works. As Campbell (1976: 14) posits, what Lewis and, possibly, Auden call satire is not “the gentle ping-pong of the Bloomsburys played over a table of fifty years against a dead and dying generation.” What they call “satire” is “the traditional satire (real satire) of the Romans, the English, and the French, [which] has always been directed by fearless individuals, at close range, against powerful groups, prominent contemporary figures, and against the follies and shams which they represent.” For these reasons, Campbell claims: “Mr. Lewis is in the great tradition.” (14)

To conclude, Lewis writes a robust, devastating and cold satire in a century in which satire seems to be dead. His radical stance relates him to a very special type of tradition of writers; not that of suffering moralists, but of elitist satirists with a very ‘rude assignment’ in life. Lewis’s twentieth-century satiric theory, which is largely built on Augustan foundations, is clearly rooted in history. In so being, Lewis’s satiric stance is akin to that of Griffin and the “Chicago” theorists of satire–as exemplified in the work of Sheldon Sacks and Edward Rosenheim published in the 1960s–. Using Rosenheim’s words for the purposes of this paper, Lewis’s satiric theory merely “consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historical particulars.” (31, quoted in Griffin, 1994: 29) See how Lewis’s intolerant narrator Snooty in *SB* describes his Behaviouristic approach to things and people as an external or detached satiric stance, that is, Lewis’s.

I select one case of typical behaviour. [...] Some of my specimen *people-behaving* (or ‘misbehaving’) have been treated as if they were characters in a novel [...] adapted of course to bring out the most full-blooded response of which they are capable. These behaviourist specimens of mine [...] *They should be looked upon purely as art.* (66-69)

## 5. THE NATURE OF LEWIS’S SATIRIC RHETORIC

So far, I have claimed that applying a conventional theory of satire’s moral rhetoric to study Lewis’s lampoon would be inadequate, because this needs to be examined from a critical perspective that is as broad in meaning as the nature of his zaniness. Here I ap-



ply Griffin’s assumptions on the use of a rhetoric of inquiry, a rhetoric of provocation, a rhetoric of display, and a rhetoric of play in order to illuminate the nature of Lewis’s satirical discourse.

As Griffin (1994: 53) contends: “the rhetoric of provocation is “negative,” a critique of false understanding. [...] In provocation, the question is designed to expose or demolish a foolish certainty. [...] One obvious way in which satire provokes its reader is in its calculated “difficulty.”” Lewis’s satire does provoke its readers, yet it not only does so for its “calculated “difficulty””, but because such obscurity often takes the form of paradox, an ancient rhetorical form and a favourite device of daring and witty writers from the early Renaissance through the seventeenth century and beyond.

Just like Juvenal, Donne or Swift exploit paradox in their works, so does Lewis in his. Thus, Kerr-Orr’s, Kreisler’s and Snooty’s coarse opinions, attitude and social interactions in *WB*, *T* and *SB*, respectively can be taken as examples of Lewis’s awareness of the meaningful potential of paradox as a rhetorical form. These facts explain, for example, that Kreisler goes to a jail, where its staff members exert power over him, not because he considers himself at fault, but to obtain some food, attention and shelter. Kreisler feels forced to go a police station in order to fulfil his demands because he can not achieve them in natural circumstances. The paradox around which this satirical episode develops implies that, as it can also be observed in today’s society, a person in economic difficulty can apply for relief, whereas a person who needs food, attention, love, social recognition and help is led to his own devices unless he first becomes a criminal.

Similarly, Snooty justifies his despicable and paradoxical behaviour towards his lover Val in the name of Behaviourism and his great oriental “capacity for disinterested devotion” (108) Nevertheless, these values do not prevent him from accepting her money and having sex with her. Making Griffin’s words (1994: 54-55) mine, paradox serves Lewis “as an opportunity for the display of rhetorical ingenuity, for advancing an unorthodox opinion or (more often) exposing vulgar errors, or for stimulating a thinking temper.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the central paradox around which this work and some of Lewis’s main satirical works like *WB*, *AG*, *RQ*, *VS*, *SB*, *THA* and *SC* evolve fulfils all these three functions at once. Lewis’s form of paradox is provocative not only because it seems absurd, but also because it challenges received opinion. As Lewis states “Satire [...] refers to an ‘expressionist’ universe [...] where everything is not only tipped but steeped in a philosophical solution of [...] the intense and even painful sense of the absurd.” (*MWA*, 101)

Lewis’s satires tease their readers with the play of “contraries”<sup>15</sup> just as much as Swift’s, something that conveys a calculated obscurity to their works. Moreover, just like Juvenal provokes by challenging received opinion in his satires, so does Lewis in his, for example, by forcing his readers to admit that past idealized images of ourselves are out of reach. However, if Juvenal and Swift’s satires cannot mend people’s errors, neither can Lewis’s.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> According to Griffin (1994: 54) some of the best-known Augustan satirists in English like Swift make use of provocative paradoxes for such purposes. Take as examples *Gulliver’s Travels*, *A Modest Proposal* and *Tale of a Tub*.

<sup>15</sup> For further reference, see Terrazas (2005) and Munton (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Contrary to Swift and Juvenal who conceived their satires as reforming mechanisms, Lewis didn’t and couldn’t sustain his satires upon this very foundation.

They can only make people *see* what Elkin (quoted in Griffin, 1994: 63) describes as "the world's enormities and absurdities", which is illustrated in the paradoxical conduct of most Lewisian characters inhabiting all the creative works mentioned above. As T. Sturge Moore claims (quoted in Edwards 2000: 11), Lewis catches the attention of his readers because of "the strength of the impenetrably abstract and convoluted" statements in which he attempts "to expound the metaphysical paradoxes behind life" [...] "as an undertone of mockery and celebration." Lewis favours the poetic image, the paradox and the absurd in his fiction, therefore, because his main aim is not to moralise, but to achieve visual directness in art. Just like some of the most well-known satires by Byron or Swift do, Lewis's represent acts of telling uncomfortable truths. In doing so, these four satirists leave us with the inescapable burden of the present.

Griffin's point on a rhetoric of inquiry and of provocation not only supplements the old rhetoric of persuasion, but also sheds enormous light on the role of Lewis's satire in history. As I have shown, the satirist regards his targets with an attitude more complex than simple rejection. However, his satiric rhetoric has unjustly been taken as an example of flawless satiric rhetoric in the past. ("Lewis's criticism would be effective if it were confined to satire, but frozen into a dogma of antithesis it is worthless. One cannot combine the convex and concave to get a new perspective [...] all we get is hot air. [...] There is wisdom only of the conscious mind, which, though versatile, is in one piece." (Frye, 1997: 380))

Frye's comments on some of the "vices" of Lewis's satiric technique in his discursive books show evidence of the traditional hostility to satire. Lewis is not alone in this panorama though; other satirists have also been accused of raising too many questions in their arguments, and so of losing control of their inquiry and getting satire out of hand. This situation, which is explained by Griffin (1994: 64) by recalling Booth's view of "unstable irony",<sup>17</sup> means that, in some cases, there are reasons to think that even satirists cannot contain the irony they have let loose. As a result, satirists (i.e. Juvenal, Swift or even Lewis) even when not being ironical, are viewed as writers who do not limit the implications of their attacks. Contrary to Booth and Frye's opinions on Lewis's satire getting out of hand, the latter is far more aware of the extent and implications of his attacks than some critics have said.

Satirists who do not take care to make their intentions explicit or to provide—as Pope [and him] often does—contrasting examples of virtue perhaps cannot blame their readers for assuming that the satire extends beyond the specified target to include a wider range of similar figures.<sup>18</sup> [...] The satire that attacks everybody touches nobody. And the satirists who laughs too widely may be, like Lucian, dismissed as a buffoon. (*MWA*, 68-70)

Lewis is conscious of the fact that the satirist is a *persona non-grata*: "how handy a thing it is to somebody seeking to combat Mr. Lewis *the critic*, to have Mr. Lewis *the satirist* in the background. (*RA*, 58) In the section entitled "malice", Lewis defends himself

<sup>17</sup> This concept implies that though we assume an author to be in control of the irony, we cannot reconstruct that author's precise meaning with any confidence.

<sup>18</sup> This is clearly the axiom that Randolph (1942) puts forward, although this is not easily applicable to the reality of the twentieth century, somehow more nihilist than previous ages.

from Harry Levin’s attacks on everything the former writes about Joyce in Lewis’s essay “Analysis of James Joyce’s mind”

And is he not a *satirist*? – That gives them a licence to say almost anything about you. Look at the perfectly dreadful things you say about other people, if you use Satire, irony, or any of those modes of expression. And in such a genteel age, too. So all that you can say or do must be compact of malice.” (*RA*, 62)

Lewis bases his discussion on Joyce on a series of principles that he exposes at the beginning of the chapter. Throughout this section, the former explains which of the principles that he supports are also followed by Joyce and which ones are not. In making criticism in this manner –Lewis claims– there is “none of the offensive omniscience from which criticism generally suffers.” (59) What Lewis points out is that, if everybody explained their principles thoroughly at the beginning of their discussions, “we should all know where we stood” (59) and, therefore, satirists like him would not be accused of malign in an unjustified manner. See Lewis’s defense of satire.

Now I will, in conclusion, very briefly consider the justification of Satire. Irresponsibly to attack, in pieces that hold them up to ridicules, this person and that, just for fun, or in ill-natured play, or to acquire a sense of personal power, is in the same order of things as playing pranks on harmless people. It is a cruel and detestable sport. Much petty Satire, occasionally written, is of that kind. (*RA*, 56)

To sum up, Lewis’s satire does follow a rhetoric of inquiry and provocation because, as Griffin’s (1994: 71) claims, “it shares a boundary [...] with philosophical (and especially ethical) writing.” This fact explains that readers need to think of much Lewis’s satire as “a kind of rhetorical performance or rhetorical contest: as display, and as a play”; something that can also be seen in the satires by Aristophanes and Juvenal, yet also in Menippean satire and in Byron’s, as they all share a rhetoric that is “merely ornamental.” (72) Just like all these satirists “implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) ask that we observe and appreciate their *skill*” (74), so does Lewis in his. Characters like Kreisler in *T* or Snooty in *SB* reveal a narrator that is far more interested in bewildering his audience with outstanding effects than in offering a contemplative moral consideration. In so doing, the “rhetorical appeal becomes a kind of fiction”, which “in itself introduces the element of performance and display.” (77) Griffin is right when he argues that in both satiric traditions—formal verse satire and Menippean satire—an element of declamatory display is prominent.

Lewis’s satire can be taken as play and display for several reasons. Making Griffin’s words (1994: 84-85) mine for the purposes of this paper, this special type of rhetorical performance can be seen as Lewis’s playfulness, because it is “reserved for self-delighting activity” and “has no concern for morality or for any real-world consequences save the applause of the spectators.” Lewis’s playfulness can be seen as a kind of play in several distinct, but related senses. One may take as examples: a) the largely purposeless or gratuitous verbal play of the type found in *T*; b) the play with moral ideas that do not have the same status they have in philosophical discourse as in *T* or *VS*; c) the play with real people who are transformed into something else when they enter the satiric game as in *AG*, *RQ*

and *TC*; d) the playful insult and invective that is teasing, competitive, or even genial of *SB*; and, e) the intellectual play of irony and fantasy that we find in *ES*, *WB* and *THA*.

All these assumptions have many implications for understanding Lewis’s satire. Nonetheless, except for Pritchard (1995: 203-205), few scholars have written about Lewis’s satire playfulness.

Lewis is very serious about the necessity of distinguishing fiction from art [...] because he believes in art as play, he becomes playful himself, creating a fantasy which will charm and amuse only those who, as it were, already *know* the difference between art and fiction—flexible, clever, playfully-minded readers. [...] as a literary critic Lewis most typically plays this role by making scenes, creating fantasies, identifying himself in playful seriousness with the equivalent of cab-drivers [...].

In fact, as “playfulness is assumed to be foreign to satire” (Griffin, 1994: 85), Lewis is far more interested in rhetorical display than in delicate playfulness.<sup>19</sup> Lewis shows fondness of a playful rhetorical display, yet his hostile denunciations have often been conceived as playful abuse. According to Griffin (1994: 86) “this taste for play has always been part of the Menippean tradition, with its fantastic invention, exaggerations, and its tongue-in-check manner”, an idea that Snooty purports as follows: “Mine is a picturesque method. I show my exhibit *in action*. I select one case of typical behaviour. [...] I display their ‘behaviour’ in a suitable situation – adapted of course to bring out the most full-blooded response of which they are capable. [...] *They should be looked upon purely as art.*” (*SB*, 64-69)

Influenced by his work as a painter, Lewis writes a visual type of satire where the reader merely observes characters (mis-)behaving, and so revealing themselves far more than they can be revealed by an author’s imagining what they think. Lewis’s sardonic treatment of characters, wit, over-elaborated satiric discourse and fondness of caricature cause the audience to infer people’s stances from their outside. This is why reading a satiric book by Lewis is like contemplating a picture.<sup>20</sup> Spender (1935: 214) is right, when referring to this trait of Lewis’s satiric discourse:

By imposing an external order on internal disorder, by ruggedly insisting on and accepting only the outsides of things, one does not improve matters. One merely shouts and grows angry with anyone who has a point of view different from one’s own. [...] One is, in a word, merely asserting that one is afraid of the symptoms, which one dislikes in oneself, and more particularly in other people, not that one can cure them.

Lewis’s satire is a kind of tragic laughter provoked by characters that are governed by mere habit and routine. His satire is not soft, but quite bitter, like Shakespeare’s in some pages of his *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear* or *Hamlet*.

<sup>19</sup> In doing so, he adopts the same attitude as Juvenal in *Satires VI* and *XIII*.

<sup>20</sup> In this sense, it is worth mentioning Vincent Carretta’s *The Snarling Muse: Verbal and Visual Political Satire from Pope to Churchill*, in which the artist deepens into the tight connection between satire and painting. Especially interesting is his study on Hogarth’s emblems and paintings. I am very grateful to Dr. Alan Munton for this idea.

As explained, Lewis's satires deal with the outside of people: "In it their shells, or pelts, or the language of their bodily movements, come first, not last." (*SF*, 46) This occurs because he is far "more concerned with ideas than" he is "with people, [...]" since people seem to him "to be rather walking notions than 'real' entities." (*BB*, 8) Lewis's fiction is one from the outside, not from the inside. His satire is cold and is not written to please, but to tell the truth. Lewis's satire "is merely a representation, containing (irrespective of what else may be included in it) many of those truths that people do not care to hear." (*SF*, 48)

Lewis does write satire, but "It is with man, and not with manners, that [...] (his) satire is called upon to deal." (50) Lewis's satire based on an external approach to things belongs to the classical manner of apprehending reality and it is an attractive companion of the grotesque. For Lewis the satirist, the eye is supreme, and the masculine formalism of the Egyptian or the Chinese is crucial as well. In sum, Lewis's satire is for the Great without rather than from the great within.

In *MWA*, he states "Art will die, perhaps. It can, however, before doing so, paint us a picture of what life looks like without art. That will be, of course, a *satiric* picture. Indeed it *is* one." The solution for the satirist is neither to write humorous books, nor be a suffering moralist, but, "like science, to bring human life more into contempt each day." Just like Swift, Lewis's ostensibly function as a satirist is to illustrate "the discoveries of science," and so to "demonstrate the futility and absurdity of human life." (183) Lewis is a satiric writer, first and foremost, and a great expert on the objective and material world. His satire is coarse, that is true, but this is because he believes that it is only by coarseness that he can truly paint society's picture. His satiric method must be understood as follows: "Lewis conceives of the world of objects. [...] Satire typically renders people as objects: [...] Lewis's theory of satire depends upon the discrepancies that arise when an object-in this theory, the human body, understood as one object amongst many – attempts to think." (Munton, in Corbett, 1998: 18)

Lewis paints the portrait in his books of an expressionist universe because his satire is a metaphysical satire occupied with mankind. However, he does not wish to transcend the animalistic nature of the man. His satire makes the human being very much alike to the automaton. For Lewis, the human being has got a special type of gift, that is, the gift of discourse. His antipathetic, coarse and absurd stance is the means through which Lewis expresses his opposition to the dehumanizing and utilitarian values that motivate the mechanistic behaviour and relationships of his fellow men. Lewis's characters are not to be taken just as the object of his satiric invectives, but also as the means of such attacks. This is why a laughing tone prevails in all his satirical works.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. THE RELATIONSHIP OF LEWIS'S SATIRE TO THE WORLD OF HISTORY

Despite the fact that literary theory debates on satire's nexus to the external world seem to find difficulty with the term "referential", most recent approaches (the "Chicago"

<sup>21</sup> When Lewis comes to maturity, he reckons that he was not very smart, when writing satire and, perhaps, that he "should have been more circumspect." (*RA*, 59) Had he been more prudent his theory of satire would have developed.

or historicist camp and the “Yale” formalist school)<sup>22</sup> agree to the idea that satire is always involved in its time and place. Lewis’s satire is clearly referential, because it either consists of a grotesque attack on one person or mankind or it is an incisive critic of historical events.<sup>23</sup> Lewis’s satire depends on facts or circumstances as its main objective.<sup>24</sup> Within this context, it is worth considering Griffin’s (1994: 123) point that “satire has prospered most when it regarded history, and history regarded it, with suspicion and rivalry” and that satirists “no less than historians, must construct their characters, in the sense that they must decide what attitudes and responses they wish to evoke, what aspects they choose to bring into focus.” (132)

Lewis defines his satire as “nothing else but *the truth*, in fact of Natural Science” (*SF*, 48). Satire is that “objective, non-emotional truth of the scientific intelligence” that “sometimes takes on the exuberant sensuous quality of creative art.” (48) However persuasive this “truth” is, I agree with Griffin (1994: 132) “To assume that a satirist or a historian is simply referring to “truth” or to “history” is to be persuaded by that writer’s version of events.”

Lewis’s description of satire and the way he applies it to his work inevitably causes the reader to have a biased view of reality. As an extract from *The week end review* on Lewis’s satire in *AG* reads, “its air of wilfully antagonising the reader” (*SF*, 37) Take as example Lewis’s satirical rhetoric in *SB*, which drives the reader to take side with the anti-hero of *SB*, even though Snooty behaves obnoxiously towards everybody here. Munton (In Corbett, 1998: 20) explains this feature of Lewis’s satiric rhetoric in brilliant terms:

Satire is troubling because, whatever reality is conceded to the other, the reader is always asked to side with the aggressivity of the antagonistic self. [...] This is the agon of satire: to create and instantly to disavow. The reader, asked to concur with the visions of a damaged self, is right to be troubled.

Just like Waugh, Orwell or Huxley, Lewis anatomises “the social, political and religious reality” of his era “in order to reveal the evils and corruption that flare up in these spheres” (Elices, 2005: 35) Accordingly, his satiric works depend “to a considerable extent on [their] capacity to be indirect”, something that Lewis achieves “by drawing upon a series of technical devices” [...] that help him “circumvent the pressure of the authorities.” (79) Following Elices’ assumptions on the historical implications of using the satirical apparatus, I maintain that Lewis exploits a large number of rhetorical strategies to hide his personal invective and general commentary upon the socio-political circumstances of his era, just as much as other well-known satirists did in the past. Just like Anaximenes, Cicero and Socrates use irony as a “way of concealing or manipulating their real intention behind a veil of indirection” (Elices, 2005: 80) Lewis also exploits this rhetorical strategy and its diverse types in some of his most well-known works like *ES* or *T*. The following example of “situational irony” serves Lewis to denounce social institutions like a provincial jail: “The discovery of Kreisler’s body [would cause] a profound indignation among the staff

<sup>22</sup> For information on these distinct approaches, see Griffin’s “Satire and referentiality” (1994: 115-123)

<sup>23</sup> For further evidence, read Smith (in Meyers 1980: 181-195)

<sup>24</sup> For further research on this, see Pritchard (in Meyers 1980: 196-210).



of the police station. [...] It was clear to their minds that his sole purpose had been to hang himself upon their premises.” (*T*, 293)

Lewis’s exploitation of the grotesque in his *WB* stories also helps him denounce the social circumstances of his time. Just as Butler exploits parody in his poem *Hudibras*, or Pope in his “Rape of the Lock”, Lewis deploys this same rhetorical strategy in satirical pieces like *AG* and *RQ* as “an intramural device whose purpose is to reflect upon authors, styles, literary genres and whole movements.” (Elices, 2005: 88) See the way in which Lewis portrays a distorted image of a well-known intellectual *coterie* of his time.

Lady Saltpeter sat down again.  
 ‘Very well,’ she said. ‘But I wish I could make you understand, Baby ...’  
 ‘All right. But it is your fault if I am like I am.’  
 ‘Indeed. That is something new to me.’  
 ‘Not so new as all that. It is all your Edwardianism, you know, that is to blame at bottom.’  
 ‘My what?’ [...]  
 ‘It is all the beastly unnatural vices of your period, Lady Saltpeter, that is responsible for me, such as I am. [...]’ (*RQ*, 70)

Just like “early Aristophanic comedies”, “Elizabethan *satyr* drama and poetry”, “Swift and Rabelais’ narratives, Pope’s poems, and West’s novels” introduce “scatological, excremental, and, generally speaking, grotesque details” (105) in order to “portray the weakness of the human condition” (110), Lewis also denigrates and puts his characters in embarrassing situations in satiric pieces like *T*, *SB* and *SC* for the same reasons.

I could feel the monster of the slimy submarine-bottoms grinding away beneath, headless and ravenous.  
 ‘Oh Listerine!’ I sighed, as I compressed the bellows of her rib-box, squeezing it in and out—it crushed up to a quite handy compass—expanding, and then expelling her bad breath. I put my face down beside her ear (I wished I’d brought her a bottle from the States as a useful present).  
 I was well away, I left much behind me I give you my word in those first spasms of peach-fed contact. Squatted upon the extremity of the supper table, with my live leg (still laden with hearty muscles) (*SB*, 48)

Furthermore, just like “Dryden, Swift and Pope were practitioners of” the wit technique “to satirise particular people without revealing their identity” (110), Lewis makes a similar ingenious use of language in *AG*, *RQ* or *SB* in order to cause laughter and delight. Lewis’s resourcefulness in the use of puns, intentional verbal incongruities and distortion of the usual semantic, phonetic or orthographic appearance of words are aimed at shocking his readers. Other important rhetorical strategies are exploited by him as well, detachment and fantasy, “two factors” that, according to Elices, “turn out to be central in the elaboration of satire” and “are mutually dependent” (95). Lewis makes use of fantasy, caricature and animal imagery, therefore, as a means of degrading his victims in *ES*, *AG*, *RQ* and *THA*.

In doing so, he not only ridicules his own self,<sup>25</sup> but also carries out veiled attacks upon specific people and institutions. See how Osbert Sitwell is portrayed as one member of the Finnian Shaw family.

Lord Osmund is above six-foot and is columbiform. His breast development allies him also to that species of birds whose males are said to share the task of sitting and feeding the young with their mates. The pouter-inflation seems also to give him a certain lightness—which suspends him like a balloon, while he sweeps majestically forward. His carefully-contained obesity may be the reason for this martial erectness. (*AG*, 350)

With this animalisation of human beings, Sitwell’s caricature turns out a brilliant source of humour, scorn and degradation. Lewis’s satire is “deliberately insensitive to the imperfections of the body. The cultural and political ideal implied by Lewis’s allusions in *AG* is not intended to make us feel comfortable.” (Edwards 2007: 17) In this sense, Elices (2005: 98) is right, when he claims that Lewis is a “most prestigious” satirist because he is “aware of the uncommitted and detached stance satire is expected to adopt.”

Finally, just like Huxley draws on dystopia in order “to reflect the horrors of dictatorships, wars or economic crises” in his “outlandish *Brave New World*” (Elices, 2005: 101), Lewis exploits this same technique in some of his last satirical pieces like *SC* and *THA* in order to provide their settings with fantasy and detachment: “As the State, the city, the Household waded in morass of debt and Mortgage, the Room was charged with despair and decay. [...] The hotel is the State. The hotel is the world [...] a matriarchy. [...] The hotel in question was naturally ill run.” (*SC*, 189) Lewis feeds on Canadian reality and actual events in order to construct this outlandish world, a microcosm and a pervasive reminder of the violence outside. Lewis shows that scientific progress, new mass production techniques and liberal policies like Capitalism are not as positive for people as Canadian institutions make them believe; they become fashionable, yet to the detriment of people’s quality of life.

In sum, this brief application of the rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus to the analysis of Lewis’s satiric pieces has shown that these constitute not only key sources of Lewis’s knowledge of the historical circumstances referred to above, yet also brilliant examples of troubling lampoon. Contrary to Foshay’s point (1992: 146), Lewis does not make “the transition from the dualism of critical observation of others to the dialectic of self-criticism, from satire to irony”. Far from it, Lewis exploits both rhetorical strategies –and many others– autonomously throughout his life. He not only achieves indirectness in his works, but also mocks the pressure of the authorities.

<sup>25</sup> See Lewis’s self-portrait as a grinning *Tyro* (Edwards 2000: front page), where Lewis’s satire turns to caricature as a strategy to articulate its deprecation. See also Edwards (2000: 253-259) As Munton rightly claims, another example of satirical painting by Lewis is *Betrothal of the Matador* (1933). But the difficulty is that the principles of Lewis’s written satire may differ from the principles or impulses behind visual satire. As Munton points out, if we think of the *Timon* pictures (1913), they do not probably share the same purposes or methods as the stories of the same period, like “Bestre” or “Soldier of Humour” (*WB*, 1927) (personal communication)

## 7. LEWIS’S SATIRE’S ALLEGED IMPACT ON POLITICAL ORDER

So far, I have described Lewis’s satiric books as inquiry and provocation. I have tried to corroborate Griffin’s point that Lewis’s satires bear “directly on our real moral beliefs” (1994: 133). Following this critic’s assumptions, Lewis’s satires can also be said to be “display and play”. These do not “touch our everyday lives.” Griffin’s ideas make one wonder also about certain assumptions concerning Lewis’s satire. As the theorist posits, “under what historical conditions does satire typically thrive? Who writes satire, and who typically does not? Whose interests are served?” (133)

As explained, eighteenth century satire needs an aristocratic context, rather than bourgeois in order to become relevant. What is more, many satire practitioners are elitist.<sup>26</sup> The fact that satire staged a brief recovery in the London of the 1930s with Wyndham Lewis, when some of the old coterie conditions were temporarily re-established, is good evidence of such assumptions.

Concerning this relationship between satire and politics, Lewis’s primary goal as a satirical writer is to respond to a particular occasion and to write good satire. As Griffin (1994: 150) claims, a quick review of the major English satirists from Butler to Swift confirms this suspicion. Satires do have political power and Lewis’s are not exception.<sup>27</sup> As his mouthpiece character says: “All social satire is political satire.” (*VS*, 57) Here is Griffin (1994: 159) explaining the situation:

Like all works of literature or art, satire is inescapably a product of and therefore implicated in the social, political, and economic culture that produced it. Certain conditions in the culture make it possible for writers to publish satire, find readers, and be compensated for their efforts (by material or moral rewards). [...] We mistake satire’s power if we see it simple as an attack from outside.

As mentioned, Lewis identifies Art with Satire. He contends that “a society of *MWA* is [...] a matter of practical politics.” (*MWA*, 13) For him, “POLITICS is for the Twentieth Century what Religion was for the Sixteenth and Seventeenth. In a time so exclusively political, to stand outside politics is to invite difficulties” (*RA*, 75). Since people in his era need excitement, Lewis reckons, all is politics. For Lewis, the place of honour is not in politics, but “to stand outside” (75) Actually, Lewis agrees with Eliot, when the latter posits that “the moralist and the politician are the two chief enemies of the artist today.” (*MWA*, 15) As Lewis supports, “[...] to think is to act). [...] It is impossible to be an observer and a participant at once: logic vanishes, all judgements are impossible when your emotions are deeply engaged. And of course the ‘involvement’ demanded by politics means you dope your intellect and carry on with something else, variously defined.” (*RA*, 76) These comments also corroborate Griffin’s (1994: 160) view that “satire” has political power, yet this power is

<sup>26</sup> Of course, this does not mean that twentieth century satire practitioners are elitist. A very good exception is Orwell.

<sup>27</sup> As Lewis’s mouthpiece character says: “All social satire is political satire.” (*VS*, 57)

the power to deter, or to intimidate. [...] satire's real subversiveness operates more stealthily by means of the inquiry and paradox. By conducting open-ended speculative inquiry, by provoking and challenging comfortable and received ideas, by unsettling our convictions and occasionally shattering our illusions, by asking questions and raising doubts but not providing answers, satire ultimately has political consequences.

Lewis high aesthetic self-consciousness drives him not to involve himself in politics, but to experiment with new forms in every work he writes. His politics are not political, but highly experimental and revolutionarily perfectionist. His satirical books can be said to be good evidence of the facts referred to by Griffin above.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided a systematic account of Lewis's satiric theory and practice by applying Griffin's interdisciplinary perspective in order to decenter the moral theories of satire and prove this theorist's conviction that our sense of the satiric form should be broadened to include the diverse Menippean range as well as the lampoon.

This critical summary of Lewis's conception of satire has revealed that this is not moral, but highly rhetorical. His satiric stance relates him to a tradition of rhetoricians like Juvenal, writers of Menippean satire like Petronius, masters of wit like Donne or Jonson and many others. Furthermore, this study has shown that Lewis's fiction is not just aimed at mocking reduction and that its objects of satirical attack need to be viewed with an attitude more complex than simple rejection. Lewis's coarse satire based on indirection allows him to hide his personal invective, yet this is not aimed at destructive analysis and worthless criticism. Lewis's satiric method is directed to tell uncomfortable truths, recreate society's picture as truly as possible and denounce the social circumstances of his time.

Lewis writes a cold, aristocratic, externalist, non-emotional, objective and devastating satire in a period in which economic and political values pervade all spheres of life. As a result, his satirical creative works and his discursive writings on satire have been described as being deeply rooted in history.

The application of Griffin's assumptions on the use of a rhetoric of provocation, a rhetoric of display, and a rhetoric of play to Lewis's satirical discourse have contributed to illuminate the broad semantic nature of Lewis's lampoon to a very large extent. Evidence has been given of how Lewis's exploitation of complex paradoxes becomes a rhetorical form aimed at challenging received opinion, exposing all sorts of human follies and causing people to be aware of their absurdities. Lewis's rhetoric of display and play have been described as means to cause the reader to feel bewildered rather than instructed. Finally, Lewis's playfulness with rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus like irony, parody, wit, detachment, fantasy, utopia, dystopia or scatology has been examined in order to show that his exploitation of the satirical mode makes him achieve all success in rendering his characters' misbehaviour in direct visual terms.

Following Griffin's (1994: 5) suggestions for the purposes of this paper, this examination has attempted to show that Lewis's satire is troublesome, unrestrained, alike to the essay form in nature and quality, abstruse in its relationship to history, questionable in its

political effect, difficult to classify formally, curious and inquiring rather than soluble, and uncertain about the pleasures it offers. These features of Lewis’s satiric discourse, which have often been defined as dangerous and caused him to overstep the mark, and altogether lead his work to the margins (to be outcast) and himself to exile, define Lewis as a great satirist. Lewis is an artist with so high an aesthetic self-consciousness that it drives him to search for new satirical techniques constantly. This explains that the artist encourages his readers to “keep moving” and get away from what he calls “the puppets” Further studies may carry out research on whether later masters of satire kept moving and Lewis’s satirical rhetoric left some kind of footprint on their work.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For further research on this idea, see Elices (2006) or Gregson (2006)

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